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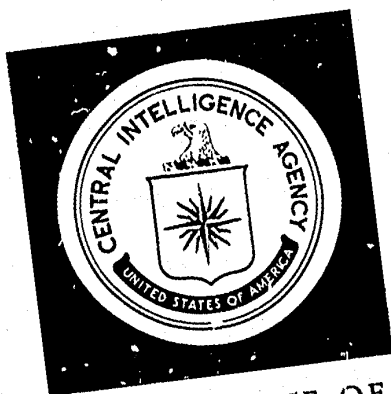
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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

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Intelligence Memorandum

China and the Lesser Dragons

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24 July 1972

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
24 July 1972

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

China and the Lesser Dragons

Summary

Following the excesses of the Cultural Revolution, one of China's first foreign policy efforts was to repair badly frayed relations with its Asian Communist allies, North Vietnam and North Korea. Both Hanoi and Pyongyang responded positively to Peking's overtures, and China's relations with both improved steadily. Over the past year, however, the once-parallel tracks of Sino-Vietnamese and Sino-Korean relations began to diverge. Following the announcement of President Nixon's planned trip to China in 1971, Sino - North Vietnamese relations moved toward a period of tension, while Sino - North Korean relations became more cooperative and harmonious.

The contrast is not hard to explain. North Vietnam sees its vital interests threatened by warming Sino-US relations. North Korea apparently believes that, by welcoming these events, it will further many of its own objectives. Hanoi suspects that the nascent Sino-US rapprochement foreshadows reduced Chinese material support for North Vietnam as well as reduced backing for its war aims. Pyongyang, on the other hand, is not actively engaged in a military attempt to reshape its position on the peninsula. It has lived unhappily with the status quo for almost 20 years;

Note: This memorandum was prepared by the Office of Current Intelligence and coordinated with the Office of National Estimates.

now it sees in the Sino-US thaw an opportunity to gain increased international recognition and to move toward Korean reunification through a diplomacy of moderation.

While Peking is acutely aware of the needs of its two allies, its policy toward them has been shaped by broader Asian and worldwide interests. Harmony in bilateral relations has been important, but not paramount. In the mid-1960s for example, the Chinese not only allowed, but furthered, a deterioration of relations with its Asian Communist neighbors. Much of Peking's behavior during this period can be attributed to the internal stresses of the Cultural Revolution, but this is by no means the whole story. Even at the height of the Cultural Revolution, Chou En-lai intervened decisively to prevent a sharp decline in Sino-Cambodian relations; presumably similar measures could have been taken with respect to Hanoi and Pyongyang had the Chinese wanted to do so.

Nevertheless, China and the other Asian Communist states had much in common in addition to their Marxist-Leninist background. The Chinese have viewed US troops in South Korea, and more recently in South Vietnam, as a threat not only to their Communist neighbors but ultimately to themselves. The opening of the Sino-Soviet rift notwithstanding, the US "menace" could not be ignored. Peking's views on this matter began to change following the Soviet build-up on its northern border, the shock of the Soviet-led invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, and the Sino-Soviet border clashes of 1969. As the level of American military involvement in the Vietnam war steadily declined and as Peking's rivalry with the Soviet Union intensified, Moscow began to loom as the greater threat to Chinese security. The changes that have occurred in Peking's relations with its Asian allies in the past year have largely grown out of this changed perspective. In embarking on its current path of cautiously bettering relations with Washington,

Peking obviously ran the risk of incurring Hanoi's wrath and of making its relations with Pyongyang more difficult.

In these circumstances, Peking has been remarkably successful in eliciting praise and even policy coordination from the North Koreans; Pyongyang at present is a smiling dragon. Things have not gone as well with Hanoi, but Peking has nonetheless succeeded in avoiding a drastic deterioration in relations. To some extent, this has been possible because Peking has not found it necessary to make the hard choices that might endanger its relationship with either Washington or Hanoi. Peking has been tacitly aided in this by Moscow's reluctance to place competition for Hanoi's favor ahead of its own efforts to better relations with the US, suggesting that the old Hanoi-Moscow-Peking triangle is now overshadowed by the larger Washington-Moscow-Peking triangle. This makes North Vietnam's balancing act that much harder and leaves Hanoi a most unhappy and frustrated lesser dragon.

Background

Peking's relations with Korea and Vietnam are strongly influenced by history. In addition to their proximity, both northern Korea and northern Vietnam are parts of the Chinese culture zone; both at times were parts of the Chinese empire, and both were tributary states of China until well into the 19th century. This legacy has contributed tension and a fear of Chinese domination as well as strong cultural ties that militate against any irrevocable break.

Other links have been forged in the more recent past. The Chinese Communists gave substantial aid to Ho Chi Minh's liberation forces well before the 1954 Geneva conference brought North Vietnam into being. And while Soviet arms were used extensively in the Korean War, it was Chinese troops who fought alongside the North Koreans. The lesser Communist powers are also China's only allies in Asia, both having signed mutual defense treaties with Peking in 1961.

China's relations with the two states nevertheless have been stormy at times, especially since the Sino-Soviet rift widened in the early 1960s. Thereafter, whenever possible, Pyongyang has tried to balance Moscow against Peking. And, following the overthrow of Khrushchev in 1964 and the Soviet decision to assume an active role in supplying North Vietnam militarily, a triangle of power relationship emerged involving Hanoi, Moscow and Peking. The North Koreans and the North Vietnamese accepted aid, assistance, and advice from both Communist giants, but by playing one off against the other, they retained considerable policy independence.

China's relations with Hanoi and Pyongyang declined following the onset of the Cultural Revolution in 1966. Within a year, North Korean Premier Kim Il-song was being viciously attacked as a "revisionist," and "Red Guard diplomacy" was attempting to export the Cultural Revolution to the ethnic Chinese communities in both Asian



Chou En-lai meets with Kim Il-song in North Korea



Le Duan (left) and Pham Van Dong (2nd from right) welcome Chou En-lai at Hanoi, March 1971

Communist states. Following a Red Guard attack on the North Korean Embassy in Peking in 1967, Pyongyang recalled its ambassador, and Peking responded in kind.

Sino-Vietnamese relations reached a low point in the spring of 1968, when Hanoi agreed to participate in peace talks with the US in Paris. At the time, Peking's approach to the war was to couple cautious practice with strident propaganda; while carefully avoiding direct military intervention, Peking encouraged Hanoi to continue its protracted struggle against the US. To demonstrate its displeasure over the opening of the Paris talks, Peking virtually ceased its propaganda support, [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] refused even to acknowledge the existence of the talks, and continued to denounce the concept of the negotiations as a US hoax.

In August 1968, Sino-Soviet relations took on an added dimension after the Soviet-led military intervention in Czechoslovakia and the enunciation of the Brezhnev doctrine. These developments had a sobering impact in Peking and contributed to the policy shift toward moderation that was to become far more evident in 1969 and 1970.

Following the Ninth Party Congress in April 1969, the trend toward an "open door" diplomacy accelerated, and Peking placed a high priority on restoring good relations with both Hanoi and Pyongyang. A high-ranking North Korean delegation attended China's National Day celebration in October 1969, and by February 1970, ambassadors were again exchanged. Chou En-lai's visit to Pyongyang in the spring of 1970 was his first trip outside China since mid-1966 and was highly successful. Sino - North Korean relations were regaining the warmth of the period before the Cultural Revolution. Relations with North Vietnam also steadily improved as Peking began to acknowledge the existence of the Paris talks and muted its previous insistence on uncompromising, protracted struggle. In March 1971, Chou En-lai

went to Hanoi, repeating the success of his 1970 visit to Pyongyang, and capping his post - Cultural Revolution efforts to restore close relations with North Vietnam.

Between late 1968 and early 1971, the response of Hanoi and Pyongyang was similar: both welcomed the changes in Peking's policy as suiting their interests in maintaining friendships with both the Soviets and the Chinese and enabling them to retain their freedom of action. But, in the spring and summer of 1971, China's foreign policy entered a new phase to which its Communist neighbors reacted differently.

NORTH VIETNAM: Renewed Strains

The first sign of apprehension appeared in Hanoi immediately following Peking's invitation to the American ping pong team in April 1971. The signs were greatly multiplied after the July announcement of the President's intention to visit China. Hanoi's language in a Nhan Dan editorial on 19 April and a Foreign Ministry statement on 21 April was even more blunt than during the worst period of the Cultural Revolution. Hanoi warned Peking not to be deceived by the "so-called Nixon doctrine," a "counterrevolutionary global strategy" that resorts to "insidious tricks to sow division among the socialist countries" in an attempt to pressure the Vietnamese people into accepting US conditions. Indeed, the general thrust of the North Vietnamese rhetoric was that big powers could not pressure small powers--a reflection of Hanoi's latent but continuing fear that its interests would again be sacrificed to great-power politics, as they were at Geneva in 1954.

This fear was not just the paranoia of a small country long at war. The Chinese response to American actions in Vietnam had been restrained from the beginning.

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the fact that Mao Tse-tung felt it possible to launch the divisive and debilitating Cultural Revolution the following year reflected this estimate. Throughout the war, Washington and Peking had signaled each other that each hoped to avoid direct confrontation, and by the autumn of 1970 Mao told [] that he believed Washington was indeed getting out of Indochina. This was certainly not what Hanoi believed at the time, and the implications for North Vietnamese war aims were obvious.

Indeed, it seems a moot point whether Peking has ever been greatly interested in Hanoi's ultimate war aims. When Prince Sihanouk was in power, Chou En-lai carefully played on the Prince's sense of a "special relationship" with China that somehow was meant to offset pressures from Hanoi. While Peking has deliberately taken a supporting and secondary role to North Vietnam in Laos, it has never allowed Hanoi to eclipse the Chinese entirely. Even when Peking's propaganda on Laos was most bellicose, the Chinese maintained a diplomatic mission in Vientiane. All of this suggests that China views the possibility of ultimate North Vietnamese hegemony over all of Indochina with something less than equanimity. Moreover, as the possibility of at least a limited rapprochement with Washington--for reasons and on issues not directly related to Vietnam--became brighter, Peking's view of Hanoi's aims probably also changed. Moscow was calling for an Asian collective security pact, which obviously was in very large measure aimed against China. If the US were to leave Southeast Asia, the Soviets would attempt to fill the resultant vacuum, and China would be left to face Moscow alone. In such circumstances, a military defeat or political humiliation for Washington in Vietnam probably seemed undesirable to Peking.

At the same time, Peking obviously saw no utility in forcing a political humiliation on its North Vietnamese ally. Humiliation was neither necessary nor probable since the Chinese apparently accepted the view that the United States



Li Hsien-nien arrives in Hanoi, September 1971

was in any event prepared to withdraw militarily from Indochina. There was no sign that China was prepared to pay such a price for US friendship, and Peking was well aware that its ability to influence Hanoi was limited. The abortive and counter-productive effort to turn the screws on North Vietnam in the spring of 1968 was proof--if any were needed--that even brutal Chinese pressure did not achieve the desired end in Hanoi. Moreover, the North Vietnamese remained balanced between Moscow and Peking. Heavy-handed pressure would simply shift Hanoi in Moscow's direction, to China's detriment.

In these circumstances China was obliged to tread cautiously. The war was an obvious irritant in Sino-US relations, and ending it would be in Peking's interest, although not necessarily in North Vietnam's so long as Hanoi's maximum terms were unrealized. But China could only advise, not coerce. Above all, Peking could not afford to give Hanoi cause to believe that China and the US had come to a hard and fast understanding on a war settlement behind Hanoi's back. In the months following the announcement of the President's trip, the Chinese clearly were intent on limiting the immediate damage to their position and influence in Hanoi.

To this end, Peking simply ignored Hanoi's invective, while offering general propaganda support, although not as much as North Vietnam desired or expected. Peking also dispatched to Hanoi an economic delegation headed by politburo member Li Hsien-nien, the first high-ranking Chinese leader to make a publicized visit to North Vietnam since Chou En-lai's trip. Li reiterated in strong terms Peking's support for the Vietnamese seven-point peace plan and signed an economic aid agreement, a politically significant gesture since in previous years the North Vietnamese had always come hat in hand to Peking to conclude the annual aid deal.



Mao meets North Vietnamese Premier Pham Van Dong

Two months later, North Vietnamese Premier Pham Van Dong was given red-carpet treatment during a five-day visit to Peking. When he left, the communiqué noted that Sino-North Vietnamese relations were developing "on the basis of Marxism, Leninism, and proletarian internationalism"--a Communist catchphrase denoting close solidarity and one that Hanoi had avoided using in this context for several months. Mao personally greeted Pham Van Dong, and Chou En-lai gave explicit assurances to the North Vietnamese [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] These and other gestures seemed to mollify Hanoi, and public criticism of the Chinese subsided.

It was inevitable that the President's trip itself would rekindle and reinforce Hanoi's apprehensions. Moreover, the announcement in the fall of 1971 that the President would also visit Moscow gave the North Vietnamese new cause for worry. On the eve of the President's Peking trip, when the Hanoi press began to give heavy play once again to its distaste for big-power summitry, Peking followed its earlier pattern, overlooking Hanoi's rhetoric and taking steps aimed at shoring up the confidence of its ally. In early March, Chou En-lai flew secretly to Hanoi and conferred with Premier Pham Van Dong and Cambodian Prince Sihanouk, who was there for talks with the North Vietnamese. According to Sihanouk, who later described the visit to newsmen, Chou assured Pham Van Dong that Peking would not act, even secretly, as an intermediary between Hanoi and Washington in resolving the Indochina war.

Though this, as far as it went, was exactly what the North Vietnamese wanted to hear, Hanoi's publicly stated concern continued unabated. The communiqué issued by Sihanouk and the North Vietnamese after Chou's visit contained adverse comments on the communiqué issued in Shanghai at the conclusion of the President's visit, and Hanoi's media continued to comment adversely on the visit by quoting liberally and sarcastically from the Shanghai document. Indeed, the North Vietnamese

undoubtedly felt they had reason to complain. Although the Chinese portion of the Shanghai communiqué did not directly contravene established North Vietnamese positions, its language was far too vague and pacific to satisfy Hanoi, and the Chinese evidently did not even attempt to contradict the view of the war set forth in the US portion of the communiqué.

The April Offensive

Despite Soviet and Chinese assurances of continued support, the North Vietnamese apparently had come to the conclusion by the early spring of 1972 that things were moving too quickly toward some degree of understanding between all the great powers with a stake in the Vietnam conflict. And though many factors undoubtedly contributed to the decision to launch the April offensive, the goal of shattering--or at least cracking--the detente-in-the-making between the US and each of the Communist great powers must have loomed large in Hanoi's calculations. Through this action, Hanoi, also apparently hoped to refuel the lagging competition between Peking and Moscow for Hanoi's favor.

Ironically, the offensive, although certainly a production of considerable drama, has had the effect of making Hanoi a less important cockpit for the Sino-Soviet diplomatic struggle. Moscow had strengthened its position vis-a-vis Peking at least marginally the previous autumn and winter as the Chinese took their first tentative steps toward Washington. But the timing of the North Vietnamese offensive was an obvious embarrassment to Moscow. So was the subsequent US mining of North Vietnamese harbors, which also had the effect of drawing the Soviets more directly into the diplomatic maneuverings connected with the war. Like the Chinese, the Soviets now had good reason to want an end to the conflict; they also had much less hope of exploiting the situation. By going ahead with the Moscow summit, they dissipated whatever advantage they had gained in Hanoi over the preceding several months.

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Significantly, the Chinese have chosen not to try to extract immediate advantage from this situation. Indeed, rather than offering fervid support for Hanoi in obvious contrast to the reluctant Soviets, Peking has been about as restrained as Moscow in responding to the stepped-up war. As

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Chou and other leaders have frequently avoided comment on the Vietnamese situation, even on occasions--such as banquet toasts for visiting dignitaries--when normal usage called for it.

Chinese restraint did not vanish when the President announced his decision to mine North Vietnamese harbors and resume full-scale bombing of the north. Characteristically, Peking waited three days to respond, and when an official government statement was issued on 11 May, it was restrained and moderate. Although it condemned the US military measures as a "grave step," it did not characterize them as a threat, challenge, or provocation to the Chinese people or government. China raised that issue only on 12 June, just 48 hours before the public announcement that Dr. Kissinger would again visit Peking. The Chinese statement on this occasion was clearly designed to preserve Peking's credibility in Hanoi, and the question of a threat to China has not been aired since.

This lack of vigorous propaganda support for Hanoi even when Peking could have been expected to attempt to score points against Moscow, speaks eloquently of Chinese distaste for many aspects of current North Vietnamese policy and attitudes. Chinese officials, at home and abroad, have criticized the North Vietnamese offensive, implying that Hanoi's

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tactics were a mistake and not likely to succeed. Peking has given no indication that it believes the vigorous US reaction to be a turnabout in Washington's desire to withdraw militarily from Indochina; the Chinese obviously believe Hanoi's tactics have done little to speed the process.

The general Chinese point of view on Indochina has been fairly consistent both before and after Hanoi's offensive began. Their propaganda line has emphasized the importance and necessity of an early and rapid US military withdrawal from the peninsula; it has treated political questions much more summarily and with much less precision. The Chinese have not totally ignored North Vietnam's seven-point proposal for ending the war, with its emphasis on political change in South Vietnam, but they have treated this aspect far more cavalierly than Hanoi would have wished. Moreover, Peking has carefully avoided attributing duplicity and evil motives to the US--above all to President Nixon himself. Remarks of this nature have invariably been edited out of Hanoi's propaganda before it is replayed in China. Still more striking, Peking has at no point condemned the President's proposal of 8 May for an internationally supervised cease-fire, US troop withdrawals within four months, and an end to US acts of force in Indochina in exchange for a return of US prisoners; Peking has rerun North Vietnamese comments rejecting these ideas. It is quite possible that the Chinese have indicated to North Vietnam that they believe these terms will give Hanoi an opportunity ultimately to achieve its objectives. In fact, the Chinese could at present consider Hanoi's intransigence on political issues a greater obstacle to the realizations of Chinese aims in Indochina than US military actions.

If the Chinese have been offering Hanoi advice, they can be fairly sure that the North Vietnamese will at least have been listening closely. The mining of North Vietnamese harbors has made China Hanoi's remaining lifeline for supplies. For the first time in the war China is in a position to

strangle North Vietnam's war effort--and much of Hanoi's civilian economy as well. All Soviet and East European aid, as well as Chinese supplies, must now pass through logistic channels controlled by Peking.

There is, of course, no evidence that the Chinese contemplate a naked assertion of their advantage in order to force their will on Hanoi. From their point of view, little would be gained by such a brutal demonstration, which would amount to an obvious abandonment of a Communist ally. But Hanoi surely recognizes that much now depends on Chinese good will. Indeed, the drawn-out argument between Peking and Moscow over whether Soviet ships originally destined for Vietnam could call at Chinese ports may be intended for North Vietnamese consumption in more ways than one: both China and the USSR seem to be protesting that Hanoi's supply difficulties are the other's fault; at the same time they are demonstrating that a resolution of these difficulties is not their highest priority. Hanoi has almost certainly gotten this message, little as they like it.

Having conveyed this message, together with their presumed advice regarding Hanoi's best course of action, the Chinese are also protecting themselves in the event their advice is rejected. To accomplish this, they need only allude to the important role China must play in keeping North Vietnam militarily and economically afloat; in practice, they are also demonstrating that this does not mean that Hanoi need expect to be completely abandoned.

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In short, while the Chinese are probably giving North Vietnam unpalatable advice, they are simultaneously demonstrating their importance as an ally. And, as in the period following the initial announcement that President Nixon had been invited to China, they are attempting to limit the damage to their prestige and influence in Hanoi. Peking and Hanoi no longer have parallel policies on Indochina, but there appears to be a point beyond which Peking--not surprisingly--is unwilling to press the argument.

NORTH KOREA: Kind Words

In marked contrast to the sharp deterioration in Sino - North Vietnamese relations that followed the announcement of the President's China trip, Sino - North Korean relations--which were already on the upswing--continued to improve. North Korean Premier Kim Il-song delayed until 6 August, but he then weighed in very heavily in favor of the trip, the first, and still the only, foreign Communist leader to do so. Kim characterized the trip as a great victory for Peking and as a great defeat for the US policy of trying to isolate China. Just as important, Kim chose the occasion to strike a new note of flexibility in Pyongyang's policy toward South Korea.

It is quite possible that Kim's new note was coordinated in advance with Peking. His formulation on the President's trip paralleled the line of those being used in briefing cadres in China on the President's visit. Moreover, when on 5 August Chou restated Peking's views on the Korean question, his formulation almost certainly had been discussed earlier with Pyongyang. In an interview with James Reston, Chou said, "To solve the Korean question, a way should be found to bring about a rapprochement between the two sides in Korea to move toward a peaceful unification of Korea. That, of course, takes time, but this demand is reasonable." Chou suggested that a peace treaty to replace the armistice was in order.

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This attempt to focus on Korean issues was not isolated. In the summer of 1971, Peking took a number of steps to indicate that it believed the time for movement on the Korean question was at hand. In June, for the first time in five years, Peking had appointed a Chinese representative to the Military Armistice Commission. Moreover, the Chinese issued a strong and immediate endorsement of the North Korean eight-point unification plan and the seven demands put forward at the August meeting of the armistice commission. Peking also endorsed and gave wide publicity to the mid-August opening of the Red Cross talks between Pyongyang and Seoul on the question of divided families.

A new and expanded economic aid agreement was signed on 15 August, and three days later a high-level delegation, headed by North Korea's chief of staff and including the commanders of the air force, army, and navy, arrived in Peking. When the delegation departed on 7 September, a new arms deal had been concluded which provided for a significant increase in both the quantity and variety of military goods to be supplied by Peking.

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Coming at a time when there was little tension on the Korean peninsula, the arms deal appeared to be a gesture by Peking to consolidate Pyongyang's support for China's opening to the US.

For its part, Pyongyang probably saw definite advantages in reaffirming a close relationship with Peking and in adopting its own "open door" policy. For 20 years the North Koreans have tried sporadic border attacks, subversion, and dramatic gestures like seizing the Pueblo to undermine South Korea, encourage a withdrawal of US troops, and bring all Korea under their rule. This approach yielded few successes, and with the lessening of tensions signaled by the reduction of US forces in Vietnam and the thaw in Sino-US relations, Pyongyang must have reasoned that more could be gained by exploiting

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the drift of events than by opposing them. By following in China's footsteps, Pyongyang would gain expanded international recognition and eventual acceptance into the United Nations. This more moderate policy line, Pyongyang may have reasoned, would hasten the withdrawal of US forces from South Korea already under way. Domestic considerations, such as reductions in North Korea's defense budget, may have also played a part in the decision. In addition, the North Koreans probably judged that Peking would lend no support to the "adventuristic" policies of the past.

If this was indeed the North Koreans' reasoning, they were almost certainly correct. Even in 1969-1970, when Peking first made a concerted effort to repair relations with Pyongyang, Chinese statements and propaganda on Korean issues were notable for their lack of belligerency, and they almost invariably omitted Pyongyang's fieriest remarks when replaying them for China's audience. This public position almost certainly corresponded closely to Peking's private views on the matter: China clearly did not want to improve relations with North Korea if that only increased the chances of being dragged into new and dangerous disputes resulting from Pyongyang's belligerence. In fact, as Chou En-lai's remarks to Reston suggest, Peking is now anxious to liquidate the remaining vestiges of the Korean war. This would enhance China's image as a reasonable actor on the international scene and would remove another obstacle--albeit less important than the Vietnam war--to better relations with Washington.

The Chinese are aware that, in addition to the two Korean governments, four powers have interests in the Korean peninsula--China, the USSR, the US, and Japan. Peking's moves on this complicated chessboard suggest that they realize a resolution of the long-standing Korean stalemate will have to take the interests of all these powers into account, but it is also clear that the Chinese hope to maximize their own advantages in the process. Thus,

Peking appears to recognize that Pyongyang will continue to strike a balance between China and the Soviet Union, and that too hard a push for North Korean support in the dispute with Moscow is likely to be counterproductive. The Chinese expressed neither public nor private concern when the North Korean foreign minister traveled to Moscow at the very moment they were entertaining President Nixon. Instead, they appear to be making the more subtle argument that they can offer Pyongyang more than the Soviets in disposing of the remnants of the Korean war. This argument presumably claims that US forces remain in South Korea largely to "contain" China, and that the current rather flexible Chinese foreign policy--specifically the dialogue with Washington--is likely to win Pyongyang benefits the Soviets simply cannot deliver. In reality, Peking is far less concerned about the rapid withdrawal of US forces than its North Korean ally. Although their public position calls for rapid and total US withdrawal, the Chinese may well feel that--as in the case of Vietnam--the Nixon doctrine, US budgeting problems, and the reduction of troops so far point to an eventual eradication of the US military presence on the peninsula anyway. The Chinese probably believe that too rapid a US disengagement from Korea would merely impel Seoul to turn to Japan for additional diplomatic and economic support. And while Peking probably understands that it would be extremely difficult to exclude Tokyo from the peninsula entirely, it certainly wishes to minimize the Japanese influence there as much as possible.

In this respect, Peking's present approach to the Korean problem serves the Chinese well. Peking probably reasons that if it can keep the level of tension down in Korea, Tokyo will be far less inclined to see its security in jeopardy and therefore will be less likely to undertake a major rearmament. Pyongyang has followed Peking's lead on Japan. Rather than continue to portray Tokyo as being forced by its social and economic structure to move inexorably toward "militarism," first Peking and then Pyongyang began to take the line in the fall of 1971 that Japan was capable of avoiding this path

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and of choosing peaceful coexistence with its Asian neighbors. Moreover, when Peking began in mid-1971 to move toward normal relations with Japan, North Korea agreed in December to allow a semi-official Japanese group to set up a trade office along the lines of the one handling a part of Sino-Japanese trade. The efforts of both Peking and Pyongyang clearly are aimed in considerable part at heading off any possible Japanese move to fill the vacuum as the US presence in South Korea declines.

Given the convergence of Chinese and North Korean interests, it is not surprising that on the eve of the President's visit to China, Peking strongly endorsed Kim Il-song's proposal for peaceful unification of the Koreas, and that following the visit, Pyongyang issued a lengthy statement commenting favorably on the Shanghai communiqué. Using the visit to further its own interests, Pyongyang sought to score points by expressing its willingness to enter into its own dialogue with Washington. The North Koreans also urged Seoul to enter into negotiations that would "break down barriers" and lead ultimately to reunification. The two governments announced on 4 July that such talks had in fact been undertaken.

The initial Chinese response, carried in a People's Daily editorial of 8 July, leaves little doubt that Peking generally approved of this development. In particular, the Chinese seem pleased with the clauses calling for reunification of the peninsula "without outside interference." Like the North Koreans, the Chinese will argue that this implies a diminution of US influence in Seoul, a check against Japan, and--perhaps above all--a fairly rapid dismantling of the UN machinery concerned with Korea. Peking associates the UN role in Korea with the 1952 vote in New York that all but condemned the Chinese Communists as an outlaw government, and for obvious reasons it would like to see the Korean machinery phased out.

Close coordination between Peking and Pyongyang on the question of UN consideration of the Korean

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question this fall has become clearer since the joint communiqué of 4 July. Soon after its release, Chinese Foreign Minister Chi Peng-fei told [redacted]

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[redacted] that Peking planned to support Pyongyang's desire for a UN debate. And even prior to the announcement on 20 July that China would back the draft resolution on Korea sponsored by Algeria and other non-aligned countries, the Chinese began to lobby in a number of capitals for support. After testing the waters earlier this year, the Chinese apparently have decided to abandon their previous caution, largely because they now feel that the new resolution, by avoiding the polemics of past Soviet and Mongolian resolutions, stands a much better chance of passage. Moreover, Peking apparently sees an opportunity here to improve its already good relations with the North Koreans and to score points at the expense of the Soviets, who were reluctant to offer early support for the new resolution.

For all their current cordiality, however, there are limits to the present relationship between the North Koreans and the Chinese. North Korea is not going to put all of its eggs in the Chinese basket; the Soviet connection will be maintained. Indeed, recent events suggest that considerable Korean suspicion of China still exists. Peking, in turn, views questions of concern to Pyongyang in a larger and wider prospective; Chinese attitude toward the US military presence in the south may be a case in point. But both countries are interested in a move away from attitudes on the Korean question that have remained frozen for two decades. So long as this is so, they will have good reason for close cooperation.

THE MIDDLE KINGDOM

This cooperation, from China's point of view, is largely a product of circumstances rather than an end in itself. There is no reason to doubt that Peking wishes to continue working closely with Pyongyang, primarily because such a course coincides with larger considerations such as the

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declining profile of the US in Asia and the Soviet threat to Chinese security and influence. The Chinese must fit their relations with their two Asian Communist allies into this larger frame of reference. The relationship with Pyongyang fits well; that with Hanoi is not nearly so compatible.

This broader view presupposes a multipolar diplomatic environment in which China's interests occasionally could coincide with those of the US but not often with those of the USSR. It is certainly no coincidence that Chou En-lai has quoted several times from President Nixon's speech of June 1971 in which the President referred to five major centers of power, including China. This does not mean that Peking will soon abandon its material, diplomatic, or propaganda support for the "liberation forces" in Indochina, its stronger verbal and diplomatic support for Pyongyang, or its championing of small states against both "US imperialism" and "Soviet revisionism." It does seem to mean, however, that China will not let these supportive activities interfere with its larger interests, and that it will, if necessary, at least partially curtail such support in deference to those larger interests.

North Korea has lived with a status quo that clearly is distasteful to it for two decades. Peking's changed diplomatic posture thus fits Pyongyang's needs, since a relaxation of tension in the Korean peninsula implies an eventual change in that status quo. Hanoi, on the other hand, has been directly and violently challenging the status quo in Indochina for at least 13 years, and a relaxation of tensions in that peninsula would mean an acceptance of a status quo abhorred by the North Vietnamese. Hence, Hanoi disagrees with certain aspects of Peking's present policies. But because rapprochement with Washington has become a major element of the continuing Sino-Soviet rivalry, neither North Korea nor North Vietnam can play off the two Communist giants for its own ends as successfully as before. As a result, these lesser dragons in the long run are likely to consider--if not necessarily accept--Chinese views more carefully than ever before.